

READY FOR BATTLE
Ephesians 6:10-12
Message and Web Notes

This morning we're starting into the final section of Paul's letter to the Christ followers in Ephesus. We've seen that the first three chapters of Ephesians have to do with doctrine or teaching about what God has done for us in Christ:..

Then starting in chapter 4 through the first eight verses of chapter 6, he tells them and us how we are to live because of what God has done for us...

Now the last portion of the letter really stands by itself. It's completely and totally related to everything that has been said up to this point, but it's something that needs to be fully understood and appreciated, so Paul sets it apart and puts it at the very end of his letter as if to give it added emphasis.

Read verses 10-20...This morning, verses 10-12. And we'll look at in four pieces:

THE CHARGE:

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

There is a call or a charge for God's people to be strong. Please notice and understand. He doesn't simply say, "Be strong." We're not called upon to be strong in ourselves, in our own abilities, in our own skills and capacities. We're not told to be strong in worldly approaches and methods, in worldly power or worldly wisdom. We are not called to be strong in the same techniques and strategies that are used by pagans. We are not called to be strong in the power of positive thinking. We are not called to be strong in health and wealth. We are to be strong in the Lord, in Christ, in him as a person.

Moses' instructions to the Israelites to cross over the Jordan and possess the land that was in the possession of pagan nations:

Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you." Deut. 31:6

When Paul wrote to Timothy who was pastoring the church in Ephesus, Timothy after several years of ministry became fearful and timid. He was apparently dealing with stronger temptations and opposition than ever before, and Paul wrote to him saying, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control...
You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2 Tim. 1:6-8, 2:1

THE REALITY:

The existence of invisible spiritual forces of evil fighting against us

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. (v. 12)

Paul first mentioned the reality of the unseen spirit realm back in chapter 2 –

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. (2:1-2)

So we're talking about powers and forces in the universe that are on the side of the devil. Invisible, supernatural beings that are a part of Satan's army. The reality of spiritual warfare was something that the apostle Paul was very much aware of. From the get-go Paul faced opposition. He was run out of the synagogue, threatened by Demetrius and the local silversmiths who were losing money because their idol sales were down due to Paul's ministry. Paul knew that great spiritual opportunities bring great spiritual opposition and even danger. He wrote to the believers in Corinth and told them,

"I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries. 1 Cor. 16:8-9
Notice the connection – "a wide door for effective work" and "many adversaries."

What I want to do right here is give you a quick overview of Satan's schemes and strategies. This is really important, because it raises a question for all us:

Am I ignorant of Satan's designs?

Satan lies and is the father of lies.

"He has nothing to do with the truth, because there is not truth in him." John 8:44

Satan entices God's people to sin.

Then Satan stood against Israel and incited David to number Israel...But God was displeased with this thing, and he struck Israel. And David said to God, "I have sinned greatly in that I have done this thing. (1 Chron. 21:1,7-8)

Satan leads people away from a pure devotion to Christ.

I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. 2 Cor. 11:3

Satan blinds the minds of unbelievers.

"The god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of the Son of God." 2 Cor. 4:4

Satan brings accusations against God's people.

Then Satan answered the Lord and said, "Does Job fear God for no reason? Job 1:9

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. Zechariah 3:1

Satan knows and quotes scripture.

Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written,

"He will command his angels concerning you,"

and

"On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" Matthew 4:5,6

Satan steals the word that is planted in people's hearts.

And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. Mark 4:15

Satan seeks to cause you to fall.

“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat. Luke 22:31

Satan seeks to fill our hearts with deception and greed.

But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land?” Acts 5:3

Satan masquerades in costumes of light and righteousness.

“...even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is not strange if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.” 2 Cor. 11:14

Satan performs signs and wonders.

The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders. 2 Thes. 2:9

Jesus warned us about the same thing:

False Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. Matt. 24:24

Satan hinders the spread of the gospel and the work of missions.

We endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face; because we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, again and again—but Satan hindered us. 1 Thes. 2:18

Satan causes some sickness and disease.

Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. Job 2:7

"Ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, *whom Satan bound for eighteen years*, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?" Luke 13:16

God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil. Acts 10:38

Satan is a murderer.

You are of your father the devil...He was a murderer from the beginning.... John 8:44

When the Turkish believers were killed in Malaya two years ago, it was the work of the devil. John says (in 1 John 3:12),

"Do not be like Cain who was of the evil one and murdered his brother."

Satan is murderous, vicious, violent, brutal and bloodthirsty. Satan hates life and relishes in the slaughter of the unborn, drive-by shootings, terrorist attacks, and wanton killings in high schools, universities and churches.

So all of that gives you a sense of the devil's designs and strategies. So don't be ignorant. Instead, be alert and on guard over his designs for your life. Don't give him a foot in the door; don't give him an inch.

As a result, our objective is:

**THE OBJECTIVE:
To stand against the devil's schemes**

...that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. (v. 11)

And the means by which we are enabled to stand is by putting on the whole armor of God.

**THE MEANS:
Put on the whole armor of God**

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. (v. 11)

Folks, here's the deal: the true Christian described in Eph 1-3, and who is seeking to follow Christ faithfully as is described in chapters 4 and 5 and the first nine verses of chapter 6 can be sure that he or she will find themselves involved in spiritual warfare. If we are walking worthy of our calling, in humility rather than pride, in unity rather than divisiveness, in the new self rather than the old, in love rather than lust, in light rather than darkness, in wisdom rather than foolishness, and in mutual submission rather than self-serving independence, then we can be absolutely certain we will have opposition and conflict.

I want to give you some wake-up warnings with regard to evaluating your life and whether or not you're awake and alert or oblivious and complacent when it comes to the reality of spiritual warfare:

- if the Christian life for you is relatively easy
- if you're quite content with a life of relative ease and comfort
- if you don't find yourself wrestling daily with the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions
- if you derive more pleasure from the things of the world than from Jesus
- if you take more delight in the gifts than in the Giver
- if you don't find yourself in virtually a daily battle with the works of the flesh – pride, lust, envy, jealousy, a critical attitude, a judgmental spirit, a spirit of legalism, bitterness, fear, worldliness, wickedness, a lying tongue, gossip, slander, deceit, hypocrisy, duplicity, a spirit of division and strife
- if you don't find yourself broken over your own sin and weeping over your own wickedness
- if you're more concerned with fixing someone else than with the wretched condition of your own heart
- if you are able to walk out of here on a Sunday morning having critiqued the sermon for its accuracy without allowing it to convict you personally
- if you're able to walk out of here week after week and say, "Great sermon, pastor!" but you're not being transformed
- if you're able to watch crap on TV or rent DVDs or go see movies and not be stirred by the Spirit of Holiness to shut it off, change the channel, or get up and leave
- if you're staring at pornography on the internet
- if you're squandering precious time in a thousand mindless ways
- if you don't find yourself hungering and thirsting, yearning and panting for God
- if you who are parents aren't storming God's throne with agonizing prayers and pleadings, crying out to God with tears on behalf of your sons and your daughters
- if you feel in any way smug, self-confident or self-righteous in your relationship with God

- if you are neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm
- if your worship on Sunday morning is lethargic and lifeless
- if you're oblivious to the presence of principalities, powers, cosmic powers and spiritual forces of evil at work in the world
- if you find yourself unmoved by the persecution and martyrdom of believers in other parts of the world simply because of their devotion to Jesus
- if you find yourself relatively apathetic toward the lostness of the lost and the eternal destiny of the perishing
- if you are very much at home in this world and rarely if ever find yourself longing for heaven

If these things are even partially true in your life, this doesn't mean that you are not in the thick of spiritual battle. Oh, you're right there. No, it just means that you are losing and he's winning. It means that you are not standing your ground, that you are not resisting the devil, and therefore he is not fleeing from you. Whatever his designs may be, they are working. Whatever his schemes and strategies are for you, they are achieving their desired ends. No, you are very much in the thick of spiritual battle, but not as a conqueror. And as a result, you are in no condition to storm strongholds and take back lost ground from the enemy. You are in no condition to fight on behalf of others. Until you are willing to take the admonitions of these verses seriously, you will remain impotent and of little threat to the kingdom of darkness.

But this is not your calling. You have been called to step out of the darkness and to walk in the light, to seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness, to resist the devil and to hold your banner high declaring your allegiance to and your love for Jesus Christ.

So what if – what if we were to serve notice to Satan this morning? What if you were to serve notice to the devil and all his angels and to any of his legions who may be in this room or lingering around your life, declaring your renewed allegiance to Christ you're your intention to stand firm, renewing your commitment to obey the command and claim the promise of our Lord who says to his people, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you."